

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT A 01516 192146Z

64

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07 TRSE-00 COME-00

SCA-01 NEA-10 INSE-00 VO-03 AGR-05 SIL-01 LAB-04 /064 W

----- 104570

R 192110Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 70

INFO AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, ETRD, HA

SUBJECT: ARRESTS AT CUSTOMS, IMMIGRATION AND LEVANTINE BUSINESS
COMMUNITY

REF: PAUP 1441, 1386

1. PRESIDENT DUVALIER APPEARS TO HAVE SET OFF A SPUR-OF-THE-MOMENT ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN THAT RESULTED IN A SERIES OF ARRESTS LAST WEEK AT PORT CUSTOMS (REFTELS), IMMIGRATION, AND THE SO-CALLED ARAB BUSINESS COMMUNITY. THE PORT CUSTOMS ARRESTS BEGAN JUNE 2 FOLLOWING THE THEFT OF IMPORTED FOOD SUPPLIES (NOT PL-480) IN WHICH THE PALACE HAD CONSIDERABLE INTEREST DUE TO THE GOH EMERGENCY EFFORT TO FEED DROUGHT VICTIMS IN THE NORTHWEST. THE DETENTIONS DECIMATED THE RANKS OF PORT CUSTOMS, CULMINATING IN THE DISMISSAL AND ARREST OF ITS DIRECTOR, PHALYNX NICHOLAS, ON JUNE 11. HIS PERMANENT SUCCESSOR, ALBERT BOYER, WAS INSTALLED JUNE 13, AND IS BEGINNING THE UNENVIABLE JOB OF REVIVING, AND IF POSSIBLE REFORMING, THE POORLY TRAINED AND DEMORALIZED CUSTOMS CADRE AT THE PORT. THE BUSINESSMEN ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CORRUPTION WERE THE NEXT TARGET. POSSIBLY 30 LEADING BUSINESSMEN, LARGEMLY SYRIAN AND LEBANESE IN ORIGIN, WERE ROUNDED UP AT MIDDAY

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PAGE 02 PORT A 01516 192146Z

ON JUNE 13 AT THEIR PLACES OF BUSINESS, HERDED INTO OPEN TRUCKS,

AND CARTED OFF TO THE CASERNES DESSALINES, FROM WHENCE THEY WERE QUIETLY RELEASED AFTER BRIEF QUESTIONING ON JUNE 15. IN AN OTHERWISE UNCONNECTED ACTION, A SPECIAL SURVEILLANCE SQUAD SET UP BY INTERIOR SECRETARY PAUL BLANCHET AND IMMIGRATION DIRECTOR MAJOR AUBAINE AZOR BROKE UP A FALSE PASSPORT RING THAT ENABLED HAITIANS TO DEPART FOR THE BAHAMAS ILLEGALLY.

2. NASSAU CONNECTION - THE IMMIGRATION ARRESTS INVOLVED TWO IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS AT THE AIRPORT, LUCKNER MICHEL AND YVES DORCE, WHO PLACED VALID GOH EXIT STAMPS IN COUNTERFEIT HAITIAN PASSPORTS PURCHASED IN NASSAU BY ONE DENNIS PIERRE, WHOSE BOAT MADE FREQUENT TRIPS TO THE BAHAMAS. THE RING SOLD THE FALSIFIED PASSPORTS TO YOUNG, UNEMPLOYED HAITIANS WHO DEPARTED BY BOAT FOR THE BAHAMAS FROM PORT-AU-PRINCE, GONAIVES, AND PORT-DE-PAIX. ALLEGEDLY PIERRE SOLD THE PASSPORTS TO MICHEL AND DORCE FOR \$1,500 EACH, WHO IN TURN CHARGED THE ILLEGAL EMIGRANTS \$100 FOR EACH IMMIGRATION EXIT STAMP PLACED IN THE PASSPORTS. (FOR NASSAU: WE ARE UNAWARE IF GOH CONSUL GENERAL JULIO BORDES IS IMPLICATED.)

3. COMMENT - ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES APPEAR TO BE THE LEIT-MOTIF OF CURRENT GOH ACTION IN ECONOMIC AFFAIRS. ALLEGED CORRUPT PRACTICES BY UNADMired AND POLITICALLY VULNERABLE ARAB BUSINESSMEN COULD HELP THE GOH EXPLAIN INADEQUATE CUSTOMS REVENUES AND EVEN SOARING PRICES AT THE RETAIL LEVEL, ALBEIT WE UNDERSTAND DUVALIER ORDERED THE DETENTIONS FOR QUESTIONING AS A STRAIGHTFORWARD REACTION TO THE CUSTOMS SCANDAL. (A SIMILAR CRACKDOWN ON SMUGGLING AND CONTRABAND TOOK PLACE IN MARCH AND APRIL OF 1974, ALSO AT A TIME WHEN THERE WAS MUCH PUBLIC DISCONTENT AT INCREASED FOOD PRICES AND ALSO DIRECTED PRIMARILY, ALTHOUGH NOT ENTIRELY AT THE ARAB BUSINESS COMMUNITY. HOWEVER, THOSE ARRESTED WERE QUIETLY RELEASED IN LAST WEEK OF JULY, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE OF LACK OF EVIDENCE.) THE ARAB COMMUNITY IS NOW WEARILY ANTICIPATING A POSSIBLE SHOW TRIAL OF SYMBOLIC FEW OF ITS MEMBERS. MEANWHILE, THE ARABS ARE QUITE BITTER ABOUT THEIR TREATMENT, WHICH THEY FEEL WAS A DELIBERATE HUMILIATION FOR PURELY DEMAGOGIC PURPOSES. HOWEVER, SINCE THEIR PROSPERITY DEPENDS UPON PRESIDENTIAL GOOD WILL, THERE IS LITTLE THEY CAN DO. THE MEDIA ARE DENOUNCING THE ORGANIZERS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, WHO, THEY CLAIM, VICTIMIZE THE EMIGRANTS WITH FALSE CLAIMS OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD. AND IN THE BACKGROUND, AWAITING ACTION BY THE COURTS, IS THE THREE-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PORT A 01516 192146Z

MONTH OLD POSTAGE STAMP SCANDAL, WHOSE DELAYED OUTCOME REMAINS A SUBJECT OF WIDESPREAD INTEREST AND SPECULATION. HOWEVER, WHILE THE ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITIES MAY HELP ENSURE THE PROPER IMPLEMENTATION OF DROUGHT-RELIEF FEEDING AND RECOVERY PROGRAMS, THEY CAN DO LITTLE TO EASE HAITI'S SERIOUS ECONOMIC WOES -- RISING FOOD PRICES, REDUCED URBAN EMPLOYMENT AND DECLINING INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND AN IMMINENT B/P CRISIS (PAUP 1409).

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CORRUPTION, REMOVAL FROM OFFICE, CUSTOMS OFFICIALS, THEFTS, FOOD ASSISTANCE, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: blochd0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PORTA01516
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750214-0871
From: PORT AU PRINCE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750634/aaaabfbw.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 PAUP 1441, 75 1386
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: blochd0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <04 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>; WITHDRAWN <21 Jun 2005 by BoyleJA, PRIVACY>; RELEASED <23 JUN 2005 by coburnhl>; APPROVED <23 JUN 2005 by blochd0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARRESTS AT CUSTOMS, IMMIGRATION AND LEVANTINE BUSINESS COMMUNITY
TAGS: EAID, ETRD, PINR, HA, (NICHOLAS, PHALYNX)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006